## SUMMARY

# Priest - an Expert in Spiritual Matters
## Henri J.M. Nouwen's Concept of Pastoral Care



Keywords: pastoral care, priesthood, theology, hospitality, prayer, compassion, Eucharist, spirituality



This dissertation is devoted to the issue of the H.J.M. Nouwen's pastoral care concept. Dutch priest was born in 1932 and was a lecturer at several universities. He was considered to be a well-known writer and spiritual guide. Nouwen devoted the last decade of his life to pastoral ministry in the community of the L'Arche - Daybreak in Toronto, working among the disabled. He died in 1996.

H.J.M. Nouwen in publications share his view on the priesthood and pastoral care. He paid a lot of attention to the spiritual life of priests, which is characteristic in his works. The Church teaches similarly, emphasizing that the priest's vocation is to be an spiritual matters expert.

All this is an inspiration to search in the Nouwen's works to response for question: how a contemporary priest should act and be spiritually formed. That content analysis allows to bring out priests pastoral activity and spiritual formation and how is the priest role in the Church and in the world, with regard to Nouwen's view. Thus, the concept of pastoral care (goals and methods of operation) reveals itself, where the basic tool is the priest as a spiritual guide.

According to the Nouwen's view, the most important thing in the priest life is his own spiritual development, in which processes taking place in the present day should be taken into account. In addition, he finds inspiration for this development in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, commonly called "pastoral", and in Latin American theology, devoting much attention to the practice of Christian life. Pastoral formation, constant discovery of one's vocation, getting to know the meaning of prayer and finding God in everyday human matters, help in spiritual development.

The Nouwen's publications show a close connection between the priest's own spiritual life and his pastoral competence. The look at one's own experiences, in the light of faith, becomes fruitful in pastoral ministry, in which it is easier to indicate

people to God's pre-emptive love and encourage them to accept an attitude of hope, gratitude and compassion.

A spiritual accompaniment ministry performed by the priest includes the sphere of interpersonal relations, on which the whole pastoral ministry is based. They result in creation of the community, brotherly bonds and a hospitality climate. This is achieved by practice of prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist, as well as showing mutual forgiveness and helping each other in difficulties and suffering. According to Nouwen, these elements are the features of people of faith communion.

That the priest could be an expert in spiritual matters, he must be a man of prayer, a mystagogue and a prophet, and also a doctor who makes his personal internal wounds the source of spiritual experience. This view of the priest's vocation to pastoral ministry remains in harmony with the Church's contemporary teaching on formation and the tasks that priests have to fulfill towards the faithful entrusted to them. And although in his publications he does not directly refer to the documents of the Teaching Office of the Church, it is clear that during creating his concept of pastoral care, he relies on the same sources inspiring his teaching, derived from the centuries-old tradition of the Church.